

1 Isobel Dillman Batty

Tape #55

This is an interview with Mrs. Paul (Isobel) Batty, 721 S. 500 W., Vernal, Utah, on this 24th day of October, 1977. This is Mike Brown of the Golden Age Center.

Isobel Batty (Isobel): They didn't want him to come at all. He was only eighteen or nineteen when he left home, and they wanted him to continue his education. He had always been very scholarly, but he was pretty adventuresome, too. When he came here, I think there were only eleven people in this valley. I think eleven, I may be wrong. It wasn't very many; I think two women and nine men. He was a little eager to get to the valley and he went ahead of the people. I don't know how many were coming, maybe only one other, but he went ahead of them and came to the valley first. He came in, not around by Roosevelt that way, but in through LaPoint. He saw the place that he wanted to have a homestead, even that early part if he'd stay. What he was going to do was get a homestead and get enough money to go back to Iowa and finish his education. But things started happening. He found my grandmother, so he stayed. The homestead that he had homesteaded on, the government confiscated that. Of course, they reimbursed him or gave him some other land. They built Fort Thornburgh on it; that's up in Maeser some where. Then his homestead was down east of that. I don't know what to tell you about him.

Mike Brown (MB): What stands out most in your memory?

Isobel: What a fascinating storyteller he was. He could captivate people all day long. We would sit around the table at night when Grandpa was coming--all of us were excited. Every one of us just adored him. It wasn't because he was generous with money or stuff, I don't know that he ever gave us anything. I don't think he ever kept candy in his pockets or anything like that, but we knew we were loved, and he entertained us all the time. We didn't have very much space. When Grandfather came, somebody was crowded a little, but we were real eager to have him come anyway. We would sit around the table at night and Grandfather would tell stories, and sometimes we would talk almost all night long—if it weren't school nights and Mother didn't send us to bed. He could just take the most mundane thing and make a story of it. I wish we had some recordings of him because he is so fascinating.

He also, if any of us were a little discouraged, he expected the very best from every one of us. He would look at some of our school work and if it weren't good, then he would just make some little crack about it, but he would stay right there until we redid it. He didn't want just mediocre performance from anybody, and he had a way of getting the best out of everybody, I don't know how. I remember how everybody came to him for advice about everything. When Grandfather came, the phone was ringing, the doorbell was ringing, the doorbell—we didn't have a doorbell—knock all the time for Grandfather to give them some advice. Even sometimes legal advice. That's because he was so wide-read. I think he had planned to be a lawyer; his son became a lawyer.

MB: Is he your maternal or paternal....

Isobel: My father's father.

MB: So your name was Dillman.

Isobel: And my father died when we were pretty small children. So Grandfather used to come and stay a long time with us. He saw, although my mother was married again, he saw himself as our father. The father role for helping us to become what he felt Father would want us to be. He used to scold me quite a little bit if I read trash. I would pick up any little story and magazine stories, and Grandfather wouldn't say anything, he'd just go get a better book and hand it to me.

I used to get so angry when I'd get all dressed up to go to a dance and here a date would come in and he'd greet Grandfather and they'd sit and talk. That was it, and there I'd sit. Sometimes when Grandfather was there, the young people, boys and girls would just come in, particularly the boys. They didn't come to see me, and I was a little peaked about that, too. They came to visit my grandfather. It wasn't just young people. Everywhere he went, and he didn't—I'm sounding as though he monopolized the conversation—he didn't. Everybody participated, but they kept asking questions.

I guess he wanted every experience, just about, there was, because he carried the mail. He was the first mayor, I don't know if you knew that. He was the first, well he's accredited for being the first, schoolteacher, but he said he wasn't. He said there was one before him, and I read somewhere else that there was another. But Grandfather seemed to think there was only one before him: Fin Britt. Then I read in the *Daughters of the Uintah* where there were several. I don't think that's right, because there were only nine people when Grandfather came, then he was here two or three years when they asked him to teach school. So I just can't see that there were other teachers before him. Now Fin Britt had a top school, it wasn't really a school, but Grandfather thought it was. The historians said he was the first one. I guess he was the first one that the city fathers, I guess there weren't any city fathers, but whoever started running the community, he was the first one they asked to do it. Now Fin Britt was helping people learn to read and write. I guess Grandpa was the first teacher that...

MB: What was the story about him being the mayor.

Isobel: He was the mayor.

MB: I mean, I hadn't run across that, was he elected or...?

Isobel: Oh yes, it tells even who his counselors and things were.

MB: In the DUP?

Isobel: I got this out of the *Vernal Express*.

MB: Can I write down that issue?

Isobel: Why don't you just borrow this? I don't let very many people do that, but I'll let you.

MB: Thank you. Has this been several years?

Isobel: No, it came out not very long ago. I had another one, but I folded it up and put in that little book of his that came out and it had all different kinds. It told in detail his experience of going after the women in the Meeker Massacre.

MB: Did he ever talk about that?

Isobel: Yes, he talked about it a lot, but, you know, I can't remember the details. I know he was very frightened.

MB: He was a pretty young fellow when that took place.

Isobel: I don't know.

MB: It would have been in his early twenties, about twenty-five.

Isobel: I know I got the idea that they didn't do all the rescuing they had planned to do because they were afraid. He wasn't too proud of that. I mean, it seemed to bother him that he was afraid. Although, at the time, it seemed to me he had every right to be afraid.

MB: Yeah, that's what I would think.

Isobel: And maybe that would have been foolhardy to go on and do what they had sort of talked about doing. I was thinking about that the other night, and I really couldn't remember. One thing: he didn't like dressing up. He always wore kind of a boot and a black hat. He wore Levis and a dress coat. That's the way he always dressed.

MB: Was he long-haired or moustached?

Isobel: He had a moustache. In fact, I've only seen one picture of him without a moustache. I've never seen him without a moustache. He was very, very fastidious and clean. In fact, I wiped off the dining room table once and he wiped it off again, and I thought I'd done a pretty good job. I was just a kid. He had lots of friends among the Indians. He was sort of counselor to the Indians.

MB: Did he work over at the agency?

Isobel: I don't know if he worked at the agency or not. He was the first forest ranger here.

MB: Do you remember any of his experiences as a forest ranger?

Isobel: You know, after you called me, I thought it's a shame that I actually know so little, I remember so little.

MB: I bet it comes in flashes.

Isobel: I don't know, but since I talked to you, I just couldn't remember. I was trying to think of all the things that I knew about Grandfather, and they're so hazy. He lived with my uncle and his

wife for a while after his leg was amputated. He died soon after that. How long, I can't remember. The person who would know more would be his daughter.

MB: Who was that?

Isobel: Belle Harmston in Provo. I don't know if you are going out that way. Mrs. Floyd Harmston.

MB: I'll be getting down there.

Isobel: She is a character in herself. She's very frank and anything that Aunt Belle will tell you, you can just be sure it's one hundred percent accurate. At least it will be her concept of whatever it is. She is very blunt. She'll say anything and she doesn't care. Now maybe I ought to call her and ask if you could come.

MB: I don't really know when I'll be...

Isobel: No, but just if you could come at all. Then you could just give her a ring because she is quite heavy and she doesn't get out much.

MB: Well, this is all for historical purposes.

Isobel: I know what it is. She is still funny, and she gets funnier as time goes on.

MB: Has anyone recorded her yet?

Isobel: I don't think so, but she would be the one to tell about Grandfather.

MB: Who is in Roosevelt? Would that be a son or grandson?

Isobel: There isn't anyone in Roosevelt now that's his.

MB: I was under the impression there was a lawyer in Roosevelt.

Isobel: Oh, he moved from there. That's Earl Dillman. He's in Salt Lake now. But I don't know if you'd know... You wouldn't get a third of the interview from Earl that you would get from Aunt Belle. Aunt Belle was Grandfather's favorite. She was the baby. She lived with him, or he lived with her, I don't know which one, for a great many years over in Whiterocks.

MB: Do you remember your Grandmother?

Isobel: My grandmother died before my parents were married. She died when my father was back East to school. That's where my father met my mother. So I wouldn't know her. But she was a fascinating woman. She wrote poetry and she was very artistic. She opened a millinery shop. She dedicated her whole life just to helping the community. They were in a position where

Grandfather could hire somebody to come in the home and do the work so Grandmother could go and take care of the sick or do whatever she wanted to do, and she did it.

MB: Was she with the Relief Society doing that, or was that just on her own?

Isobel: That was on her own, although she was very religious. I guess there was a lot of heartaches between her and Grandfather because of religion. This is a family story, and I guess it must be true. Grandmother kept asking Grandfather to take her to the temple and he wouldn't do it. So she and either four or five other ladies went to Salt Lake and were sealed to another man, the stake president. And Grandfather said that any church that would permit a thing like that, that was an error that happened. But it did happen in that period and there were several people who did that. He said that couldn't be much of a church and he made fun of the church.

MB: Was he open-minded about all religions, or did he just not really have that much of an opinion? It seemed that his experiences were so varied.

Isobel: He was pretty open-minded about most things. I think this was too close to him because he loved her dearly. I have read some of the letters... Aunt Belle has the letters he wrote, the letters that she has, Grandmother's diary. She says it's too personal. I ask her if I could copy some of it and she said no, that I could copy her poetry and some of those things, but her diary was too personal, it was going to die with her. I said, "Aunt Belle, that's too bad because she had a lot of literary talent."

MB: This state, or Brigham Young, any of the local archives here would love to have that.

Isobel: I know it. She tells about one lady who was actually the most religious lady in the community, Mormonwise, that she gave her a teapot for a wedding gift. That kind of shocked me, but I guess they drank tea. It's pretty hard for some, but I guess it's not much difference. For the most part it's pretty accurate, I think. The Meeker Massacre is in there, I know that.

MB: Are there many copies of that in existence?

Isobel: I think Aunt Mildred and Uncle Ray gave us all one for Christmas or something. Somebody borrowed mine, and I thought they brought it back, but they didn't. But I'll get it from my brother.

MB: Would we be able to quote part of it?

Isobel: I don't know why not. It came out in the *Roosevelt Standard*, so they may have it.

MB: I just wondered who would have the copyrights on that.

Isobel: Well, the *Roosevelt Standard*, I guess.

MB: We really have to watch ourselves.

Isobel: Okay, the *Roosevelt Standard*, if that's still a newspaper. Is it? And I'm not sure that's the name, but I think that's it. Mike, I bet you that would have... Of course, it came out in several issues. But I'll get it for you anyway. If you can't use it, if you've already got it, okay, but if you haven't you can use it.

MB: What was his speech like? Was it gruff?

Isobel: No, no, she made him sound in some places almost ignorant. No, that isn't it either.

MB: Literate?

Isobel: Quite a literate, he wrote a beautiful hand, was a beautiful penman. He wrote well, too. He wasn't a prolific writer, it didn't have literary quality, but it was concise and clear-thinking. There were a couple of things in that when I read it that I didn't like too well. Grandfather told me that there were a couple of places in there that weren't accurate, but I've forgotten what they were. For the most part, it was just an interview with him.

MB: Did you ever hear him mention his friendship or relationship with Pardon Dodds?

Isobel: Yes. In fact, Pardon Dodds is his nephew. The Pardon Dodds that was here when Grandfather came, his son, Pardon Dodds, married Grandfather's cousin.

MB: What was his cousin's name?

Isobel: His cousin was Pardon Dodds. Oh, that he married? Oh, no, Ruby Hardy.

MB: Ruby Hardy was Peter Dillman's cousin? By marriage?

Isobel: Yes. See, Grandmother Dillman was a Davis, and Ruby.... No, Grandmother, Lydia Davis, married a Hardy. Was that their daughter?

MB: Were they pretty good friends, the original Pardon Dodds?

Isobel: Oh yes, they spent a lot of time together. You see, there weren't very many people here then. Then Grandfather, the homestead that Grandfather had wasn't too far from Pardon Dodds' homestead. The second homestead, not the first one. The second homestead, I think the ground even touched. They were good friends. And they were involved a little bit in the law. The army, wasn't Pardon Dodds here because of the army?

MB: Yes.

Isobel: Yes, the Indians. The government. Then Grandfather worked with him quite a little bit. He mentions him a lot in this book.

MB: Did he ever mention Jake Workman?

Isobel: If he did, I don't remember. I think Jake Workman is mentioned in this book.

MB: Oh, is he?

Isobel: I think so.

MB: What about the drugstore? Did he ever talk about that?

Isobel: He had a drugstore, didn't he?

MB: I got the impression that the millinery shop and the drugstore were side by side or were right in the same area.

Isobel: They could be. I think they were right down where Ashton's new grocery store is [southwest corner of 100 South Vernal Avenue].

MB: When you think about your granddad, what always comes into your mind?

Isobel: How honest, how fun, how I was always very proud of him, very proud to introduce him as my grandfather. He had little beady eyes, and how witty he was! I don't know, he used to sell some of his fruit. Our neighbor told us, she was telling me the other day, that these fruit trees that he would get from Iowa, there were every kind, because he would try every kind. Then he would get in his wagon and go peddle them.

MB: You said he was interested in horticulture?

Isobel: Extremely so, tried everything.

MB: Did you say he had started that in Iowa?

Isobel: His interest had been in that in Iowa. He wanted to, I think he had planned, now I may be mistaken about this plan, to go to school. Aunt Belle could tell you. She knows so much more about him than I would. If you had her impressions of Grandfather, it would be right. She is a pretty sharp person.

MB: Did he like pranks and tricks?

Isobel: He wasn't a practical joker, but he did enjoy a good story and a good situation that he didn't create particularly.

MB: A fellow told me a story of when he was a game warden, of him tracking a guy who was poaching fish, fishing out of season, and how he tracked the guy down a creek, that the guy knew that Pete Dillman was after him. He circled back around and scared Dillman's horse off and jumped on his own horse and came to town. Pete had to walk fifteen or twenty miles to get back to town.

Isobel: That might be.

MB: Did he ever mention that?

Isobel: No, but I imagine that poachers would try any trick in the trade, that Grandfather would be vulnerable.

MB: That was the only one I've heard where someone got the best of him.

Isobel: He's pretty sharp, I didn't ever know anybody got the better of Grandfather.

MB: We just have to take them at face value.

Isobel: Well, that could be. That could easily be even with somebody that was pretty sharp.

MB: You said he was sheriff for a while, or was he deputy?

Isobel: I don't know. I think he was deputized quite a few times. He was involved with the outlaws, the Butch Cassidy bunch.

MB: Was he good with a gun?

Isobel: He was a very good shot. I don't know if he learned that after he came here or if he knew that before he came.

MB: Did he ever have to shoot anyone? Did he ever mention that?

Isobel: I don't think so. He was a very kind man, very, very kind man. He was careful not to belittle any of us. He had a way of getting us to do what he wanted us to do and still making us feel that we....

End of tape.